

THE
HISTORY
OF
ELIZA.

Written by a Friend.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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Y S O T A S Y



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T H E R E A D E R.

THE writer of the following sheets was prevailed upon to make them public, by the Lady to whom they are addressed, who thought the conduct of Eliza, in some of the most trying circumstances of life, would afford a useful lesson for her sex, and

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whose amiable character deserved to be drawn from obscurity. Those who read only for amusement, will find themselves disappointed; if, in this little performance, they expect to meet with any of those surprising turns of fortune, so easily created by the imagination, but which the judgment can never realize.

The History of Eliza is a narrative of facts, which gives the

relator

relator no claim to the merit
of invention; if the public is
pleased with her manner of relat-
ing them, her expectations will
be more than answered.

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THE
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OF
ELIZA.

AT last, Madam, I take up my pen to execute the task your Ladyship has long since imposed upon me. You are not to impute this delay to any neglect of your command, or reluctance to enter upon the task itself, but to my fears of being unequal to it. Not that the character of the charming Eliza, which I have undertaken to give you, has any thing in it so intricate, or equivocal, as to require a more than ordinary

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penetration

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penetration to unravel, or eloquence to display; in her, all was simple, plain, open; undisguised; her manners, like her wit, were the beautiful product of nature. But however clear my notions of her may be, yet, as I am not used to throw my thoughts upon paper, I am apprehensive that I shall not be able to communicate them to you with a proper degree of conciseness and perspicuity.

Of the various fortunes to which her youth was exposed, I am perhaps better qualified than any other, to inform your Ladyship, having been a witness to many of the facts I shall relate, and others I have either had from herself,

herself, or her husband, whose confidence I possess, and who has given me leave to communicate them to your Ladyship.

Since I am writing her history, then, I will begin with a description of her person, concerning which, your Ladyship, like a true woman, is particularly inquisitive ; and here being a woman likewise, you will scarcely suspect me of flattery, for however we may be biassed by friendship in other matters, in the article of beauty we seldom turn the scale.

Eliza cannot be called tall, her stature rises a little, and but very little, above the middle size, nothing can be more beautifully turned than her

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neck and shoulders; her figure has in it all that delicacy, that softness, and elegance, which we admire in the Medicean Venus.

Your Ladyship has seen several pictures of Eliza, but there is not one of them that gives us a just idea of her person. "That is true beauty," says La Bruyere, "which no painter can express." And how indeed can painting imitate the varied graces of a countenance, animated by the most sprightly wit, and to which the softest sensibility of heart is perpetually lending new charms. Her eyes are the finest in the world, bright, yet languishing; tender, yet full of fire: Such is their powerful expression,

OF ELIZA.

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expression, that it is scarce necessary for her to speak ; her smile is bewitching, and the tone of her voice so moving, that every thing she says, goes directly to the heart.

With this beautiful person, with a mind adorned with every grace, and elevated by every virtue, Eliza was unfortunate, and how could it be otherwise ? Since the situation she was thrown into, and the persons she was connected with, made that beauty, and those virtues, the cause of all her distresses, which, in other circumstances would have proved a source of happiness to her. Envy, armed with the authority of a mother in law, persecuted her for that beauty,

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which

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which she was too little conscious of, to find any consolation in it for the ill usage it exposed her to.

To the deepest artifice she had nothing to oppose, but candour and simplicity; to the most selfish designs, disinterestedness and generosity; malice and fraud, she combated with no other arms than gentleness and sincerity; and every tyrannical exertion of power she bore with so much patience and submission, as furnished continual opportunities of oppressing her.

The death of her mother happened when she was about six years old; this Lady, who had been stolen from a boarding school by Mr. B. the father of

of Eliza, lived under the displeasure of her parents, on account of this rash action several years; at length they were reconciled to her, but would never see her husband; and at their death, the fortune they left her, which was very considerable, was settled on her infant daughter.

Mr. B. though a man of pleasure, thoughtless in his expences, dissipated in his amusements, and discontented at the great neglect that had been shewn him in the settlement of his wife's fortune, yet took great care of his daughter's education; the happy talents she had received from nature were cultivated with extreme attention, and the improvements she daily

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made in every useful study, as well as every polite accomplishment, proved at once the force of her genius, and the intenseness of her application.

At fifteen she chose her father for her guardian. This circumstance, it was thought, facilitated his addresses to a neighbouring Lady, the widow of a Gentleman of considerable rank and fortune.

Nothing could happen more unfortunately for Eliza, than to have a woman of Mrs. Denby's character enter her father's house as the mistress of his family. If any passion reigned more powerfully in her heart than avarice, it was envy, of which the virtuous and beautiful of her own sex

were

were the more immediate objects: with what malignant eyes then must she behold Eliza, already the admiration and love of all who knew her?

She brought with her a daughter about two years older than my friend, whose person was agreeable enough, but her mind was a perfect transcript of her mother's. It is not always certain, that a similarity of manners produces a reciprocal affection. Mrs. Denby saw all her own qualities faithfully copied in her daughter, yet she did not love her, Miss Denby was young, her mother envied her an advantage, which, while she possessed herself, she made a very free use of; the

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the restraint she kept her under, and which she was desirous should pass for an effect of her prudence, was born with great impatience by Miss Denby, who judged truly of the motives, by which she was actuated ; for wicked people understand each other : it is only the virtuous that are deceived by them.

Eliza received her mother-in-law with respect, and her new sister, with all that tender effusion of heart, so natural to young persons of good inclinations, who, judging of others by themselves, can only be taught caution by long experience.

Miss Denby, artificial, designing, crafty and malicious, repaid with a thousand

thousand false professions of friendship, the sincere affection which Eliza, deceived by her plausible behaviour, soon began to entertain for her. Miss Denby, who had no idea of carrying kindness and generosity farther than words, was pleasingly surprised to find her new sister, eager to seize every opportunity of shewing her regard for her by very solid proofs. Miss Denby's fortune was nearly equal to Eliza's; but the avarice of her mother stinted her to a very small allowance, which did not permit her to indulge her love of finery, which was excessive, and occasioned her to make many a mortifying reflexion upon the difference of her appearance, and that

of Miss B. who, although she had thrown her fortune entirely into her father's hands, was absolutely unrestrained in her expences.

These expences, had hitherto, been rather proportioned to his love of parade, than to her own taste; which, though elegant, was simple and modest; and, charmed to have it in her power to gratify the wishes of her friend, she willingly retrenched what she conceived to be superfluous in her own dress, to supply Miss Denby with ornaments of which she seemed so fond, but was not permitted to purchase.

These repeated instances of generosity and tenderness, though they did not

not produce gratitude or sincerity in the heart of Miss Denby, yet, acting upon the selfishness of her disposition, increased her desire of pleasing her, in order to secure the continuance of them. She wished to become necessary to her sister, to be her confidant and share her secrets ; secrets however she had none to communicate, her heart had indeed received a tender impression, to which her innocence and inexperience had given the name of friendship, which, as she had no motive for concealing, neither had she hitherto had any opportunity of making known to Miss Denby, for the object of this prepossession she had not yet seen.

He was a young Gentleman of a most engaging figure and fine accomplishments, but whose situation was to the last degree perplexing and uneasy. His father came very late in life to the possession of a small estate, encumbered with a mortgage, which almost swallowed it up: having made a match of inclination rather than prudence, he found his difficulties so pressing, occasioned by an increasing family, that he was under a necessity of mortgaging the remainder of his little patrimony, in order to raise a sum which he might throw into trade, hoping by that means to provide for his children.

Mr.

Mr. Harley, so he was called, having been bred to no business, was wholly ignorant of those lucrative arts by which we often see great fortunes acquired; at the end of a few years, finding his circumstances worse than ever, disappointment and grief brought on a nervous fever, of which he died, leaving a son, and three daughters, with no other support, than what a small settlement he had secured to his wife could afford them.

The person to whom he had mortgaged his estate was his near kinsman, a Baronet, possessed of five thousand pounds a year; this gentleman was pretty far advanced in age when he married a young Lady, who brought him

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him a son; and his expences, which before were in no degree proportioned to his fortune, were now drawn into a narrower circle, either because he thought it his duty to make his son a richer man than himself, or what is more likely, his natural disposition to parsimony made him eagerly seize this poor excuse for hoarding.

From a man of this character, the distressed widow and her children had little assistance to expect, and indeed he suffered two years to elapse without taking any notice of them: at the end of that time, he lost both his wife and son, and a few weeks afterwards, Mrs. Harley saw his equipage stop at her door.

mid

A visit

A visit from him in such circumstances, and after so total a neglect, could not fail to raise hopes, which his equivocal behaviour neither wholly confirmed, nor absolutely represt. After some cool civilities, he desired to see her children. She presented her three daughters to him; her son was not yet returned from school.

The Baronet in a careless manner desired her to send for him, which she immediately did. As soon as the boy entered the room, the anxious mother, who heedfully observed the old man's countenance, perceived that he was struck with his appearance. Young Harley was then about fourteen: the

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elegance of his figure, the vivacity of his look, and the easy politeness of his behaviour, drew from Sir William some involuntary expressions of approbation; he questioned him concerning his learning, and found him so far advanced in it, that he could not help testifying his surprize. After continuing some moments in a thoughtful silence, which the mother attended to with a beating heart, he suddenly rose up, shook his young cousin by the hand, and, bidding him mind his studies, gave him five guineas. He then took a formal leave of Mrs. Harley; and went away, leaving her full of doubts concerning the intention of this visit, and alternately

listening

listening to the suggestions of hope and fear, according as her spirits were more or less deprest.

A friend of her late husband, a gentleman bred to the law, having taken some pains in examining the alliances of Sir William's family, assured her that he knew of no person who had so good a claim to succeed to his title and estate, in case he died without issue, as young Harley: this circumstance, so long as Sir William's lady and son survived, made little impression on her mind; but when he was left a widower and childless, in an advanced age, and under increasing infirmities, it became a subject of pleasing re-

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flexion to her, and often contributed to soften her distress.

The Baronet's unexpected visit, and the pleasure he discovered at finding her son so promising a youth, flattered her with hopes that he had some view to this event; but the smallness of his present, and the little solicitude he shewed concerning the means by which this hopeful youth was to be subsisted and educated, left her but little reason to believe that he had any notion of his claim, or any design in his favour.

Three months having elapsed without hearing from him again, she was beginning to resign herself to despondency, when she received a

billet

billet from him, couched in polite, though distant terms, in which he invited himself to dine with her, and appointed a day.

He was punctual to the time, and accosted her with equal good breeding, but with more familiarity than in his first visit: the boy he received with expressions of kindness that renewed all her hopes, which were still more pleasingly confirmed, when he gave her a direction to send for his taylor the next day, and to order several suits of cloaths for her son. These he regulated himself, and were such as were fit for a young man of fashion. He then told her that he had determined to send him

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to an academy, which he named, and which she knew was one of the gentlest in town ; and desired he would be ready to remove thither in a few days.

The widow's heart overflowed with joy and gratitude. Young Harley returned his acknowledgments with modest dignity ; the Baronet, after recommending it earnestly to him to neglect none of those means of improvement which he had now put in his power, added, " In the mean time, " your mother and I will consider of " some good trade to put you to, " which will secure to you a decent " livelihood."

At

At this stroke, so sudden and unexpected, Mrs. Harley looked pale, trembled, and cast down her eyes. Young Harley blushed; but, quickly recovering himself, replied that he had no inclination to learn any trade, but that he would willingly go into the army.

"The army!" exclaimed the Baronet, "how did that enter into your head? where will you raise money to purchase a commission?"

"If I cannot *purchase* a commission," replied the youth with great sprightliness, "I will endeavour to merit one."

"I see you have read romances," said Sir William; "but we will talk no more of this at present; mind your

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"studies, and leave the care of setting you to those, who are wiser than yourself."

Young Harley was going to reply, but his mother prevented him by a significant look.

Sir William, when he took leave of Mrs. Harley, promised to send his steward in two or three days, to conduct her son to the academy, which he accordingly did.

The youth had reason to be contented with his reception. No part of a polite, as well as useful education was omitted. Sir William made him a decent allowance for pocket-money, and frequently called to see him. He likewise visited Mrs. Harley sometimes,

times, but still continued to torment her by his enigmatical behaviour.

At one time, he would consult her with great seeming solicitude upon the fittest trade for her son ; at another, he would talk of sending him to travel, under the care of his chaplain. Sometimes he would drop hints of his intention to marry again ; in a word, his whole conduct and discourse were calculated to keep both her, and the youth, in continual suspense concerning his intentions.

He had been three years at the academy, when Sir William, being seized with a fit of the gout, that confined him to his country-seat, sent his post-chaise for him ; and though

he

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he appeared to design this only as a transient visit, yet, after a stay of two months, he shewed no intention to send him back, but directed him to continue his studies, under the tuition of his chaplain, a man of great learning and piety. Under his care he continued three years, at the end of which Sir William sent him to make the polite tour, as it is called, with appointments little inferior to what he might have expected had he been his own son.

Mr. Irwin, so was the chaplain called, attended him in the quality of his governor, and filled every letter he wrote to the Baronet with praises of his young pupil, who, at his

his return, more than confirmed the advantageous report he had made of him. On their arrival, they found the Baronet at his country-seat, labouring under his old distemper, the gout, which adding to the natural peevishness of his temper, he continued still to mortify the poor youth with his ambiguous behaviour, and to leave him in doubt of his fate. Mr. Harley was now in his twentieth year, and often made serious reflexions upon his situation. The care Sir William had taken of his education, and the respect and consideration with which he was treated, seemed to promise some future designs in his favour; but whatever these

designs

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designs were, they were all liable to be frustrated, by the capriciousness of his temper, and the unsteadiness of his purposes. A state of dependence appeared to his generous mind, an insupportable slavery. Gratitude for the favours he had already received from Sir William, made him, upon all occasions, anxious for his welfare, and solicitous to oblige him ; but no consideration whatever could force him to disguise his sentiments, to flatter the passions, adopt the resentments, or fall in with the fantastic humours, of a peevish old man, who seemed to expect these compliances, as the price of his favour towards him.

It

It was not possible for him to entertain any elevated idea of the generosity of a man, who could suffer his nearest kinsman, possibly the legal heir to his fortune, to live in a mean dependence upon his bounty, while he withheld from him his little paternal inheritance, and kept him in ignorance of his future fortune. He often declared to his mother that he would rather carry a firelock, and by doing his duty, entitle himself to bread, than enjoy his present precarious affluence under the humiliating circumstances of a dependant.

Mrs. Harley used every argument her good sense could suggest, to persuade him to wait patiently for
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the event; but Mr. Harley became every day more uneasy, and at length determined to put the Baronet's kindness for him to a trial, by desiring him to advance him a sum of money to purchase a commission in a regiment, which was soon to embark for one of the colonies, where he hoped to find opportunities of distinguishing himself, and of rising to a higher rank.

This, indeed, was the dream of youthful courage; for few rise in the army, any more than in other departments of life, by merit alone.

While he was ruminating on this design, an accident happened, which prevented him from putting it in execution,

execution, and for a time suspended all thoughts of it.

Riding out to take the air one morning, a chariot passed him, in which was a young lady, who, by a single glance, raised an emotion in his heart, which he had never felt before. Your ladyship will not wonder at this so sudden impression, when I tell you that it was Eliza whom he saw. He rode on for some moments, his imagination filled with the charming figure, that like a vision had vanished from his eyes, when, turning to have another view of the chariot, he perceived the horses floundering in a brook, which, by the great rains that had fallen, was so swelled as to become

become impassible, and the carriage
in the utmost danger of being over-
set.

Mr. Harley galloped hastily to the
place, and, assisted by his servant,
soon disengaged the chariot: Eliza,
half dead with terror, yet was capa-
ble of observing the officious zeal
with which the young stranger la-
boured for her safety: the natural
sweetness and benevolence of her
looks, heightened by gratitude, made
her appear so charming on this nearer
view, that the youth, lost in astonish-
ment and delight, kept his eyes fix-
ed on her face, with an attention that
threw her into some confusion; but,
recovering herself, she expressed her

acknowledgments for the service he had done her, in the most engaging manner imaginable, and assured him with a sweet simplicity, that she would never forget her obligations to him.

Mr. Harley begged he might be permitted to attend her home; and, without waiting for her answer, rode on with the chariot.

They reached her father's house in less than a quarter of an hour, during which time he had stolen many a glance, which always discovered to him something new to admire in her.

He alighted to give her his hand when she came out of the chariot;

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and,

and, taking a respectful leave of her, returned home.

Sir William, upon his relating the adventure to him, and naming her father, which was all the information he had received from the enquiry he had made, pleasingly surprized him, by saying that he knew Mr. B. having often met him in company; and that since he was come to live so near him, he would be glad to make up an acquaintance with him, adding,

“ We will take a ride there this evening, and enquire how the young lady does after her fright.”

Mr. Harley, without attending to the motive by which he was actuated,

drest

drest himself for this visit with more than usual care.

Mr. B. received Sir William with great politeness; and by the acknowledgments he made young Harley for the assistance he had afforded his daughter, it was easy to perceive the young lady had not lessened the merit of it.

Eliza did not appear; but Mr. Harley had the satisfaction to hear she was well, and to find the foundation of an intimacy laid between the old gentlemen, which promised him many opportunities of seeing her.

In this hope he was not deceived. Sir William, and Mr. B. passed most of the afternoons at each others

D 2 houses,

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houses, playing at chess, a game in which the Baronet delighted: Mr. Harley always accompanied him in his visit to Mr. B. and while they were engaged, used to have the pleasure of entertaining Eliza as she sat at work in the room.

Their conversation, however, always turned upon indifferent subjects; that awe which a sincere passion always inspires, prevented him from declaring his sentiments: and feeling now more forcibly than ever, all the disadvantages of his dependent situation, he thought it presumption to hope for more than her friendship, which indeed he neglected no means of acquiring.

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The favourable impressions his first behaviour had made on her, increased in proportion, as she gained a fuller knowledge of his amiable qualities ; and, although he carefully avoided saying any thing that might give her reason to suspect he was her lover : yet his conduct towards her had all that tender solicitude, that desire of pleasing, that extreme attention, which characterises a violent passion, and insensibly won her affection, while it seemed only to demand her friendship.

He delayed from time to time his application to Sir William for a commission, persuading himself that he waited only for a favourable oppor-

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tunity, and unwilling to acknowledge to himself, that, though he loved without hope, he was not able to bear absence.

When Mr. B. brought home his second lady, Sir William and his young kinsman had made a small excursion to a nobleman's seat at some distance, where they staid a fortnight.

Mr. Harley never found any period of time so tedious; and Eliza felt an unusual languor, which the hurry of receiving her mother-in-law, and the parade of visits and entertainments that followed her arrival, could not entirely dissipate.

Mr.

Mr. B. had kept his design of a second marriage so secret, that none of his acquaintance had any suspicion of it. When the news first reached Mr. Harley, he was overwhelmed with concern, a proof, that, unperceived by himself, he had entertained a certain degree of hope ; for it is the melancholy privilege of despair to fear nothing worse.

He, however, was full of apprehensions and inquietude ; and when Sir William proposed making the new-married couple a visit, he eagerly prepared to attend him, but it was with a kind of uneasiness and oppression of heart, which he had

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never before experienced so near the sight of the object of his affections.

When the servant announced these visitors, Eliza, who had never mentioned Mr. Harley to her sister before, now told her in a whisper, that he was a very sensible young man, and had a thousand amiable qualities.

Miss Denby, who had been lying in wait for a discovery of her sentiments, fancied she had now made one, and only answered her by a certain significant smile, which Eliza, not comprehending her meaning, took no notice of.

It is scarce possible to have an idea of a more sudden and more violent passion,

passion, than that which seized the heart of this young lady at the sight of Mr. Harley; in one and the same instant, she was in love and jealous; her eyes wandered incessantly from Eliza to him, she was afraid of a glance escaping her. Eliza, all sweet simplicity, took no pains to conceal the pleasure his conversation gave her.

Mr. Harley, already alarmed at the scrutinizing looks of Miss Denby, behaved with more caution than usual, so that she easily persuaded herself, because she wished it, that there was no particular connexion between them, though she more than

suspected

John S. Alden.

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suspected that Eliza was but too favourably disposed towards it.

Although she was full of impatience to learn Mr. Harley's situation and expectations, yet, crafty by nature, and always acting under a disguise, she would not openly make any enquiries of Miss B. but drew from her, by sly, and in appearance casual questions, all the information she could give her concerning him.

She found he was dependent, and this knowledge increased her hopes; her fortune was considerable, and when she attained the age of twenty-one, was entirely at her own disposal; she saw no obstacle to the success of her wishes,

wishes, therefore she took no pains to suppress them.

Every art of coquetry she now practised, in order to engage Mr. Harley's attention; but he needed not so powerful a guard against her allurements, as his passion for Eliza: by nature open and generous, he hated the artificial character of Miss Denby; though her features were regular enough, yet they bore the characteristic of her heart; her eyes had frequently a malignant cast, and even her smiles were malicious.

Mr. Hatley perceived the pains she was at to attract him, and even the impression he had made on her; and, either because he was naturally gallant,

gallant, or that he conceived a particular civility was due to a young lady who so openly distinguished him, he used to say things obliging enough to her, which she would receive with such apparent transport, as made him suddenly recollect himself, fearing he had gone too far; and then his behaviour was proportionably cold and distant.

This inequality in his manners, kept her in continual inquietude; her jealousy revived, and her penetration became more acute.

She observed his eyes often fixed upon Eliza with a tender languor, and a sigh, half smothered, steal from his

his bosom, when he was interrupted in this silent contemplation.

He never indeed seemed to seek for opportunities of being alone with her ; but she perceived that every word, every motion of hers interested him, and often, when he appeared absorbed in reflexion, and wholly regardless of every thing that passed, the sound of her voice would in an instant rouse him to attention.

But nothing perplexed her more than Eliza's apparent tranquillity, which she imagined could only proceed from a certainty of her being beloved. All her vigilance could not discover the least traces of a correspondence between them ; whence then arose

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arose that certainty ? She was determined to try if it was possible to make her jealous ; and having one day, by her coquet airs, engaged Mr. Harley in a particular conversation, during which she almost extorted from him some compliments, vague enough, but which were sufficient to answer her purpose, when suddenly leaving him with a lively air, she said, so loud as to be heard by Eliza, who was talking with Sir William, “ You
“ are the greatest flatterer in the world,
“ I will listen to you no longer.”

“ Mr. Harley a flatterer !” interrupted Eliza with a little emotion, and turning to look on him. Miss Denby, who saw her curiosity was raised,

raised, had all she wanted for the present, and therefore quickly changed the discourse ; but she had the pleasure to observe that Eliza was more pensive than usual the remainder of the evening.

When they were alone, she purposely avoided speaking of Mr. Harley, in order to oblige her to begin a conversation concerning him herself ; and poor Miss B. who could not account for the strange uneasiness she felt in her mind, after two or three fruitless attempts to introduce one, at last asked her blushing, why she had accused Mr. Harley of being a flatterer : “ Have you any reason,” said she, “ to think him insincere ?”

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"Why really, my dear," replied Miss Denby, carelessly, "I am not vain enough to believe all he says to me is true."

Eliza now cast down her eyes, and sighed—

"I fear I have done mischief," said the crafty Miss Denby, observing her heedfully, "you are jealous, sister."

"I jealous!" repeated Eliza, surprised to find such a name given to the emotions she felt, "I have no right to be jealous, Mr. Harley is no lover of mine."

"No, nor of mine neither," said Miss Denby, "notwithstanding"—here she paused maliciously.

"Why

“ Why do you not go on ? ” said the innocent Eliza, “ If Mr. Harry has given you reason to believe “ he is in love with you, why do “ you not own it ? ”

“ Why should I own it my dear ? ” replied Miss Denby, laughing. “ But, “ to be sincere with you, it is my “ opinion this young man talks of “ love to every woman he sees.”

“ He never did to me,” said Eliza.

Miss Denby could with difficulty conceal her joy at this frank declaration, of the truth of which, she had not the least doubt, having had many opportunities of observing Eliza’s ex-

treme sincerity, a quality for which she despised her in her heart.

Impatient to indulge those agreeable reveries, which her newly-revived hopes had inspired, she put an end to the conversation, and retired to her own apartment, leaving Miss B. absorbed in a melancholly, for which she, herself, was unable to assign a cause.

Mr. Harley now found himself, more than ever, exposed to the attacks of Miss Denby, which would have afforded him some diversion, if the alteration in Eliza's behaviour, had not alarmed him too much, to leave his attention free, to any thing else.

Her looks were cold and reserved; she seemed solicitous to avoid him,

and when he engaged in conversation with her, he no longer found, that softness in her accent, that air of kindness in her language, which used to go to his heart.

In vain he endeavoured to penetrate into the cause of this sudden alteration, an alteration which Eliza, herself, was not sensible of, but the involuntary effect of jealousy, the torments of which she was continually suffering, without knowing the nature of her disease.

The poor youth having no right to complain, or to seek an explanation; for though cold and distant, she was still polite to him; fatigued with the importunate coquetry of Miss

E 2 Denby,

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E 2 Denby,

Denby, and pierced to the soul by the scornful looks of Eliza, resolved to refrain from visits, which were once a source of delight to him, and now the cause of endless regrets. He pretended indisposition, to excuse himself from accompanying the Baronet, who took more pleasure than ever in the society of Mr. B. from a motive, which at that time, he either did not suspect, or cared not to examine into.

The account of Mr. Harley's indisposition, was heard with apparent concern by Eliza ; by Miss Denby, with an indifference, which she was far from feeling. At length Mr. Harley, finding it impossible to abstain

stain from seeing Miss B. while he continued so near her, and having no hope of conquering his fatal inclination, but by absence, suddenly re-assumed his old design of going abroad; and to spare himself any farther struggles with his own heart, which, but too often, reminded him of the difficulty of leaving her he loved, as suddenly made known his desire to Sir William, who had good reason to be surprised at the modesty of his request, considering the expectations he might reasonably have indulged.

The Baronet, however, without explaining himself, told him coldly, "that he had other views for him,

“ and desired he would lay aside all
“ thoughts of the army.”

Mr. Harley, with some difficulty,
suppressing his resentment at this un-
generous reserve, shewed no solicitude
to know, what these views were;
but answered frankly, “ that, his in-
“ clinations having taken that bent,
“ he perceived he should not be happy
“ if they were not complyed with.”

The Baronet was angry; but had
judgment enough to consider, that
the manner in which he acted to-
wards this youth, left him no preten-
tion to exert any authority over him;
therefore, he contented himself with
telling him, “ that he was too young,
“ yet, to know what would make him
“ happy;”

" happy ;" and hastily quitted him, to prevent any reply.

Mr. Harley, made desperate by the loss of Eliza's favour, was determined to go abroad, though without the Baronet's consent. One expedient, however, for obtaining it, suddenly presented itself, and which was, perhaps, suggested by a secret wish, of knowing how the news of his departure, would be received by Miss B.

The great intimacy that subsisted between Sir William and her father, made it probable, that he might prove a successful mediator in his behalf. That same day he went to his

E 4 house,

house, in order to solicit his good offices.

His unexpected appearance, after an absence of three weeks, produced an emotion in the heart of Eliza, that quickly communicated itself to her countenance; her blushes and apparent confusion, did not escape his observation; he gazed on her with a mixture of tenderness and delight; and fancying he now saw in her looks, some part of her former softness and sensibility towards him, he forgot the design which had brought him thither, and for some moments resigned himself up, to the pleasing hope, that he was not indifferent to her.

But

But Eliza, having recovered her first surprise; and the pleasure of seeing him again, being succeeded by the reflection of his attachment to Miss Denby, to whose account she placed this visit; relapsed into her former coldness and reserve.

Mr. Harley, again thrown into despair, took the first opportunity of being alone with Mr. B. to tell him the scheme he had formed; and intreated him to support his request with Sir William, who, he knew, would pay a proper attention to any thing offered by him.

Mr. B. who, as well as every other person, that knew any thing of the Baronet's affairs, considered this young

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man as his designed heir, was astonished at his proposal, and treated it as an effect of youthful extravagance; and though Mr. Harley explained his situation to him, he could not be brought to approve of it, but used every argument his good sense, and knowledge of the world, could suggest to him, to prevail upon him to wait patiently for the Baronet's determination, and not to throw away such great expectations, through a mistaken delicacy, and romantic notion of honour.

Mr. Harley heard his admonitions with respect; but shewed, in his answers, a resolution not to be shaken; and Mr. B. thought he could perceive

ceive that this resolution was suggested to him by some secret uneasiness, which sat nearer his heart than the precarious condition of his fortune.

He ventured to sound him a little upon this head; but, finding him impenetrable, he ceased to press him any farther.

Mr Harley went away without seeing the ladies again, to the great mortification of Miss Denby, who had just returned from a visit, and hearing he was with Mr. B. expected every moment to see him enter the room.

M. B. being laid under no injunctions of secrecy, made no scruple to tell his family

family what had passed, between young Harley and him, not without some severe reflections upon the Baronet's strange treatment of a youth so nearly related to him.

“ If he designs him for his heir,” said he, “ why does he ungenerously “ keep him in doubt of his intention? and if that be not his design, “ why does he not procure him some “ establishment, suitable to his birth, “ and the education he has given “ him?”

Mrs. B. thought this a ridiculous pretension. “ Is a man’s doing a great “ deal for a person,” said she, “ an “ obligation upon him, to do more? “ The youth will have reason to be
“ satisfied,

" satisfied, if, after all the expence
" his kinsman has been at in his
" education, he should also purchase
" him a commission; if he goes a-
" broad, he may possibly make his
" fortune."

Eliza listened to this discourse with an anxious heart, but kept her seat, and said not a word; as for Miss Denby, her emotions might have betrayed the interest she took in it, had she not hastily retired to her own chamber.

Her first reflections were full of grief and anxiety; she saw herself upon the point of being separated for ever, from the person she loved; the precarious condition of his fortune

left her no room to hope, that her mother would countenance her affection; and she was still under her controul, as she wanted a full year of being of age: while, on the other hand, the desperate resolution Mr. Harley had formed, made it necessary for her, to explain herself immediately. Were it in her power, to offer her fortune with her hand, she might well hope, such a prize would dazzle him; as it was, if he had the least sensibility, he could not fail, of being moved, both with her generosity, and the advantages it brought him; she resolved therefore to write to him, and declare her sentiments.

The

The impropriety, and even indecency of this step, so contrary to the natural delicacy, and reserve of her sex, cost her not a moment's regret; all her concern was for the success of it. Without further reflection, she sat down to her bureau, and wrote a billet, in the style of those flimsy novels, with which she had corrupted her taste, as well as her manners. I have a copy of it lying before me, which I shall transcribe:

“ Despair not, dear youth; love is
“ your friend, and will not permit
“ you to seek, in a barbarous coun-
“ try, that fortune which you so well
“ merit to enjoy in your own. You
“ cannot see my blushes; therefore I
“ will

“ will own my passion ; but, alas,
“ you know it already, my eyes have
“ but too often declared it—Think
“ no more of going abroad ; ten
“ thousand pounds await you, and
“ the hand of

M. DENBY.

“ Bring your answer yourself, to
“ morrow-evening ; you will find
“ me, at six o'clock, in the grove,
“ behind our house.”

This billet Miss Denby dispatched to Mr. Harley, by her mother's footman, whose secrecy, she supposed, she could secure by a small bribe, with orders to deliver it into his own hands, but not to wait for an answer.

All

All her thoughts were now employed, in forming schemes, to elude the vigilance of her mother, and anticipating the pleasures of an elopement. She could not endure the least interruption in these agreeable reveries; and that she might be at liberty to indulge them, she past the greatest part of the day in her own chamber, under pretence of finishing a piece of embroidery.

Eliza, however, could not be excluded; but the melancholy that appeared in her countenance, was a new foundation of triumph to her.

When the hour approached, in which she had appointed Mr. Harley to meet her, she easily disengaged

VOL. I. F herself

herself from her incurious sister ; and hastened to the grove, anxiously counting the moments, and listening with a beating heart to every noise ; one while she was employed in setting her looks to a gentle languishment, which she conceived was highly suitable to the occasion ; then she thought a bashful air and down-cast eyes, would best become her : she even conned over the speech, with which she intended to accost him—unconscious of the secret spy that watched her motions, and was silently enjoying all the ridicule in her behaviour.

This spy was Eliza's maid, a young woman of discernment and spirit ; she
loved

loved her mistress, and had, by her natural sagacity, discovered the secret inclination she bore to Mr. Harley, as well as his passion for her, which indeed was more obvious.

Miss Denby's coquetry had not escaped her notice, and she never doubted, but the coldness there had been for some time, between her young lady and Mr. Harley, was an effect of Miss Denby's artifices; the melancholly in which she saw Eliza plunged, increased her concern for her, and hatred of Miss Denby.

She was in this disposition of mind, when the footman, whom Miss Denby had made the bearer of her letter,

and who was her sweetheart, told her in confidence, the business he had been employed in. Betty, after this intelligence, kept a watchful eye upon Miss Denby; and seeing her walk alone into the grove, followed her unobserved, and was a witness of her grimace.

The hour was now past, and Mr. Harley not appearing, Miss Denby began to grow impatient, restless, and at last angry; these different emotions appeared plainly in her countenance, and although alone, she could not forbear uttering some exclamations of surprise and vexation. At last a man appeared at some distance. Miss Denby, once more, practised her looks,

looks, and advanced to meet him full of pleasing expectation ; but, on a nearer view, she perceived it was not Mr. Harley, but a servant of the family, who approached respectfully, and presented her a letter, telling her he was ordered to deliver it into her own hands, and was going to her house for that purpose, if he had not met her there.

" And who told you," said Miss Denby, glowing with rage, at this un-thought-of disappointment, " that
" you would find me here ? "

" Mr. Harley" madam, said the young man " bid me come this way,
" in hopes of meeting you, as you generally took your evening's walk
" here."

Miss Denby made no reply, but turned away with a dreadful frown, and hastily breaking the seal, read the following mortifying answer to her tender billet.

“ MADAM,

“ If I could have returned such an answer, as your merit, and the generous offer you have made me of your hand, gave you a right to expect, I would myself have been the bearer of those grateful acknowledgements, which I now presume to offer you. My fate is determined, Madam; in a few weeks I shall quit my country, perhaps for ever. It is not so much the precarious situation of my for-
“ tune,

"tune, as an unhappy passion that
"forces me into exile. I love with-
"out hope, nay, almost, without the
"desire of success; so utterly un-
"worthy do I know myself, of the
"object of my affections. Hate me
"not Madam, for this frank decla-
"ration, but pity and pardon me."

While Miss Denby was reading this letter, Betty, who was near enough to observe the angry passions it excited, by the frequent changes of her countenance, felt an eager curiosity to know the contents; this, however, she could not hope to gratify, but she was resolv'd to add to her confu-

sion, by shewing herself at this unlucky moment.

Miss Denby, hearing the sound of her steps, suddenly looked up, and shuffling the letter in her pocket, asked her, in a haughty tone, what she did there? Betty replied, with a pert humility, that she hoped there was no harm in taking a little walk; to which Miss Denby made no answer, but by a frown, and passed on towards the house.

She was scarce got out of sight, when the wench, turning to look after her, perceived the letter lying on the ground; she snatched it up, and read it with eager haste, blessing her stars for the lucky accident, that had

put

put her in possession of a secret of such importance.

Not doubting but her lady was the person, for whom Mr. Harley, in this letter, professed so tender and respectful a passion, she longed to communicate so agreeable a piece of intelligence; and had scarce patience to wait for a proper opportunity, which, however, did not offer, till she was summoned by Eliza, to assist her in undressing.

Eliza was wholly absorbed in melancholy, which Betty observing, congratulated herself on having the means of curing it. "Here is a paper," "Madam", said she, taking it open out of her pocket, "which concerns

"Miss

" Miss Denby, and, if I am not mis-
taken, you."

Eliza, perceiving immediately that the hand writing was Mr. Harley's, received it with trembling emotion. The first lines sufficiently explained the occasion on which it was written, and filled her with an extreme surprise, at the ungenerous artifice of Miss Denby, who had taken such pains to make her believe that she had rejected the addresses of a man, whom she offered herself to, and was refused.

When she came to that part, in which he mentioned a hopeless passion, a sudden blush overspread her face: notwithstanding the reserve with
which

which she had been used to think of Mr. Harley, she could not forbear making the application to herself; a thousand tender ideas rose in her mind, and kept her for some moments silent, with her eyes fixed on those pleasing words, which removed, as it were by enchantment, that oppressive uneasiness, under which she had so long laboured. Blushing at length for her own sensibility, and reflecting on the dangerous secret this letter contained with regard to Miss Denby, she had the generosity to be concerned for her, and asked her maid, in a tone that shewed she was not pleased with her officiousness, how the letter came into her possession?

Betty

Betty gave her an exact account of it, with only one small deviation from the truth; for she pretended she was in the grove by accident, and saw Miss Denby drop the letter.

" You ought to have followed " her," said Eliza, " and have given " her back the letter, without pre-
" suming to look into it. I too," added she, " have been to blame in
" reading it; but when you gave it
" me, I did not perceive it was a
" letter directed to my sister; how-
" ever, I charge you, as you value
" my favour, never to mention the
" contents to any person in the world;
" in the next place, we must contrive
" some way to restore it to her, with-
" out

“ out letting her have the mortification to know that we have seen it.”

“ You are too good, Madam,” said Betty. “ Miss Denby would not act so by you, I know she has endeavoured to make mischief, and is the cause of your looking so unkindly upon poor Mr. Harley of late.”

“ Have I looked unkindly upon Mr. Harley?” said Eliza, (melting at the thought) “ but what is this to the purpose?” resumed she, recollecting herself—“ I insist upon this letter’s being restored to my sister”.

“ Well, Madam,” said Betty, snatching up the letter, which Eliza

had thrown upon her toilet, “ I
“ will manage that.” “ Upon second
“ thoughts,” said Eliza, who ob-
served with what eagerness her maid
endeavoured to secure the letter,
“ I think it will be best to destroy
“ it.” As she pronounced these words,
she took it out of her hand, and
threw it upon some charcoal in a
brasier, that had been set to air
her chamber.

That instant Miss Denby entered
the room ; and, while Eliza in some
confusion stepped forwards to meet
her, Betty, who perceived the letter
had not taken fire, dexterously whipt
it up, and concealing it in her pocket,
left the young ladies by themselves ;

for she judged by Miss Denby's looks, that she wanted to have some private conversation with her sister.

She had missed her letter by this time; and, thinking it highly probable that Eliza's maid had found it, and also that she had communicated it to her mistress, she came full of anxious concern to make some discoveries about it, and had already prepared a plausible falsehood, which she thought would effectually impose upon them both.

Judging of Eliza's sentiments by what she herself would feel upon a like occasion, she expected her sister would throw out some severe sarcasms upon her conduct, and insult

over

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over her mortified vanity ; but nothing of this happened : Eliza suffered not a word to escape her, that could give her pain. Her conversation however did not wear that openness, nor her looks that kindness as usual, for she was incapable of dissimulation ; but as long as she did not break into reproaches and insult, Miss Denby thought it impossible that her conduct should be known to her.

She now concluded that Betty either had not found the letter, or had not mentioned it to her mistress, from a view, perhaps, of making a merit with her by the concealment, and of having some advantage in

consequence of it ; for her own motives of action were always the standard, by which she judged of those of other people.

She now thought to conciliate Betty by an affable behaviour ; in which she so over-acted her part, as to excite only contempt in the person whose good-will she was desirous of acquiring. After having played over these arts a few days, she came directly to the point, and asked her, whether she had not found a letter in the grove directed to her ? promising her mighty things from her future favour, provided she would restore it.

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G

Betty,

Betty, who might possibly have been gained by a present bribe, held out resolutely against these distant advantages, and assured her, with a very steady countenance, that she had found nothing of that sort — Miss Denby knew not what to think; she could press her no further; her mind remained in a very uneasy state, for to the mortification of having offered herself and being refused, was added the apprehension, that a secret so disgraceful to her was discovered.

Meantime, Eliza, who reflected with tender regret upon the hint her maid had given her, with regard to Mr. Harley; waited impatiently for an opportunity to convince him, that
he

he had lost no part of her esteem. He accompanied Sir William a few days afterwards, in a visit to Mr. B. He expected to have been a little embarrassed by the upbraiding looks of Miss Denby, whom, after what had past, he knew not in what manner he should accost; but, to his great satisfaction, that young lady made some excuse for keeping her chamber; and all other thoughts were soon absorbed, in the transport he felt at Eliza's altered countenance and behaviour: her eyes, her voice, her manner, all partook of the tenderness which filled her heart. The happy youth was ready to fall at her feet, to thank her for the delight-

ful hope which she seemed to encourage.

The old gentlemen walked in the gardens. Eliza attended her father; Mr. Harley offered to lead her; and now being out of sight of Sir William and Mr. B. a thousand times he was upon the point of pressing that charming hand to his lips, but he fear of offending her restrained him: a silence, more expressive than the most passionate language, painted the emotions of his heart; scarce durst he venture to look on her, lest his eyes should say too much. Eliza at length spoke first, " You are going to leave us, I hear," said she— " You are going to the East-In-

“ dies—How will your mother and
“ sisters be able to part with you!
“ How will they support so long an
“ absence?” Unperceived by her-
self, she sighed profoundly as she ut-
tered these words.

That sigh did not escape the no-
tice of Mr. Harley; he looked up to
her with more passion, but less awe
than before. “ I love my mother
“ and sisters, madam,” said he, “ as
“ much as it is possible for any son
“ and brother to do; but it is not
“ them that I shall most grieve to
“ part with.” Eliza cast down her
eyes, and blushed—it was plain she
understood him, it was plain too that
she was not offended—in order to

relieve the confusion she was under, she attempted to engage him in some indifferent conversation; but her thoughts being wholly occupied by his purposed voyage, she fell naturally into that subject again.

"Your mother," said she, smiling, "will prevent your design of leaving us—Oh! that I might believe," interrupted Mr. Harley, gazing on her passionately, "that you would regret"—he durst not proceed—Eliza, somewhat abashed at his ardent gaze, turned away her head, but sighed at the same time. The young lover, sufficiently encouraged by this artless discovery of her sentiments, threw himself at her feet,

and taking her hand, which she made but a faint effort to withdraw from him, ventured to raise it to his lips, when the sudden appearance of Mr. B. made him hastily rise, and retiring a few steps back, kept his bashful looks fixed upon Eliza, concerned for her confusion, and trembling for the event.

Mr. B's good humour, in some measure, relieved his apprehensions. " You have been deifying my daughter," said he, smiling, and looking at Mr. Harley, " I interrupted your adorations; confess the truth;" but without waiting for an answer, he turned to Eliza, " go, in child," said he, " to your sister; she is worse, and

" has asked for you :" Eliza instantly obeyed him, glad to be relieved from her perplexing situation, and departed, without once looking on her lover, who followed her with his eyes, till she was out of sight, and while his eager glances pursued her parting steps, seemed to forget that he was in the presence of her father.

Mr. B. observed him in silence. At length, " Mr. Harley," said he, " let us take a turn in the grove: I have something to say to you. Sir William is engaged at piquet with Mrs. B. we shall not be missed." Saying this, he led the way.

The youth followed in great anxiety, yet not without a mixture of hope,

hope, which he derived from the complacency of Mr. B's looks and language. When they were far enough advanced not to fear any immediate interruption, Mr. B. stopped; and looking more gravely than before:

"I will not ask you," said he,
"the subject of your conversation
"with my daughter; your kneeling
"posture, her looks and yours ex-
"plain that sufficiently; but was it
"fair, young man," pursued he with
a smile, "to endeavour to engage her
affections, without first applying to
me."

This question, at first, disconcerted the young lover; but the rectitude of his mind immediately prompted him

to

to a candid acknowledgement of his whole conduct, which was, indeed, his interest likewise, since there was nothing in it to condemn.

“ I own Sir,” said he, “ that I love your daughter ; my passion begun with my first acquaintance with her ; but, sensible of the great distance between us, I never presumed to disclose it. I thought myself happy to enjoy her conversation and friendship : all on a sudden, I perceived an alteration in her behavior ; she grew cold and reserved ; but, as the terms I was upon did not authorise my desiring an explanation, I suffered, in silence. My visits were less frequent ; and

“ now

“ now my design of going abroad,
“ which at first I had conceived from
“ other motives, became a settled re-
“ solution. When I attended Sir
“ William hither to day, I expected
“ to find Miss B. in the same dispo-
“ sition towards me ; but, to my great
“ surprise, she resumed her former
“ sweet and benevolent manner ; she
“ even expressed some concern for
“ my intended departure. Transported
“ out of myself, I fell at her feet ;
“ and had you not appeared, I might
“ possibly have been bold enough to
“ declare my passion : and now, Sir,
“ you know all my offence.

“ I find it too small,” interrupted
Mr. B. smiling, “ to warrant my
chiding

“ chiding you ; nay, more, I am inclined to reward you for this frank dealing with me.—You love my daughter ; she esteems you. I have studied your character ; I think you very likely to make her happy—what say you ? shall I propose a match between you to Sir William ?”

“ Ah ! Sir,” replied Mr. Harley, blushing with surprise, joy, and anxiety, “ Sir William will never put my fortune upon such a footing as to enable me to look up to Miss B. with hope.”

“ Things may go better than you imagine,” resumed Mr. B. “ I know you are Sir William’s legal heir,

“ heir, if he dies without issue ; and
“ he is too old and infirm to think
“ of marrying again. His own law-
“ yers have informed me, that the
“ greatest part of his estate must ne-
“ cessarily descend to you—his mo-
“ tives for concealing this truth
“ from you, are doubtless to keep
“ you in a state of dependence upon
“ him ; but something must be allow-
“ ed to the peculiarity of his temper—
“ it is your part to be silent with re-
“ gard to your future claims—and
“ for the present, we must endeavour
“ to bring him to make you such an
“ allowance, as may justify my giving
“ you my daughter.”

Your

Your Ladyship will possibly be surprised at this easiness in Mr. B. but he had, by his extravagancies, and a fatal propensity to gaming, reduced himself to a very scanty income. His daughter, by chusing him her sole guardian, had thrown her fortune intirely into his power: —Mr. B. pressed by his creditors, had appropriated several thousand pounds to the payment of his debts, and by retrenching none of his expences; nor subduing his love of play, his difficulties had daily encreased, and his daughter's fortune became more involved.

Of

Of fifteen thousand pounds which were left her by her grandfather, scarce six remained. Mr. B. stung with remorse, grew prudent too late, and retired into the country, in order to avoid those dangerous connexions, which had led him into such a ruinous dissipation, of what was not his own.

Here, however, he lived with his daughter, in a manner, more suitable to her reputed fortune, than to the narrow income to which he was now reduced, which encreased his perplexities; but like a true gamester, he still relied upon some lucky chance for retrieveing his affairs; and fortune seemed to have fulfilled his hope,

hope, when he became acquainted with Mrs. Denby, then newly a widow.

The large fortune she had, at her disposal, made her the object of his wishes; her free coquetry encouraged his hopes ; he proposed marriage, she consented, and both had their private views.

Mr. B. now listened to some proposals of marriage to his daughter, who had entered her eighteenth year; but he found her whole fortune would be expected to be paid, and though he hoped to meet with resources sufficient, in his wife's ample possessions, which were now his, he durst not yet venture to hazard

an

an explanation which he knew would be followed by the deepest resentment.

For this reason, he was not sorry to find, that Eliza was averse to marriage ; but some observations he made on her looks, when Mr. Harley was present, let him into the secret cause, and put him upon considering, whether a match might not be effected suitable to his daughter's pretensions, yet, on such terms, as might not subject him to great difficulties, on account of the present payment of her fortune.

Mr. Harley's passion for Eliza, which he soon discovered, was the foundation of his hopes : He knew

how powerfully love acts upon a young and innocent heart; with such a one, interest would be of little consideration.

While he was revolving this design, he made all the necessary enquiries concerning the settlement of Sir William's estate; and was informed, even by that gentleman's own lawyer, that young Harley was his undoubted legal heir, in case he died without issue. Sir William's known avarice, and the dependence in which he affected to keep the youth, made it not probable, that he would assign him a proper allowance, though he should approve of the match; but Mr. B. was resolved not to stop at

well

II

this

this difficulty, his main point being to match his daughter properly, without being put to any present inconvenience, with regard to the payment of her fortune.

Mr. Harley, who always had some doubts, concerning his succession to Sir William's fortune, was transported to find Mr. B. so well satisfied on this head ; but, although a youth like him might well be dazzled with the prospect of such affluence, yet it was the interest of his passion, that gave this prospect its best charms. This knowledge raised him to an equality with Eliza, and flattered his delicacy ; her father approved his love ; Eliza herself had given sufficient indications

that he was not indifferent to her—
What a happy change in his situation
had a few hours produced !

Mr. B. read in his eyes his impatience to see his daughter again ; he promised him to take the first opportunity that offered, to propose the affair to Sir William, and they returned to the house ; but Mr. Harley was not gratified with the sight of his mistress—Miss Denby took a malignant pleasure in keeping them separate ; and pretended to be so much indisposed, and so desirous of her sister's company, that Eliza could not, with any decency, leave her the whole evening. Miss B. herself was not sorry for this restraint, for she knew

knew not how to meet the looks of her father, after the tender scene to which he had been witness ; but she was pleasingly surprised, to see him enter her dressing room, when she had retired for the night ; and with a countenance, in which there was nothing severe or reproaching, tell her he desired to talk with her a little in private. Eliza dismissed her maid ; and Mr. B. immediately entered upon the subject.

He began with praising Mr. Harley, his person, his manners, his virtuous inclinations, and the solidity of his understanding ; he mentioned the certainty of his succeeding to Sir William's estate, in case he died with-

out issue, of which there was not the least probability, since his age and infirmities seemed to preclude all thoughts of his marrying again ; he concluded with assuring her, that he could not wish for a better establishment for her ; that the young gentleman had made him acquainted with the regard he had long entertained for her ; and that he was resolved to propose the match to Sir William, provided she thought she could be happy with him.

Eliza, while her father was speaking, had time to recover from her first surprise at the tenor of his discourse—sincere, candid, and full of beautiful simplicity, she answered

without affectation or disguise : “ If you approve of Mr. Harley, Sir, I can have no objection, I always esteemed him, and” — she paused, and blushed, Mr. B. willing to spare her confusion, pursued the subject no further ; only cautioned her to be secret till he had sounded Sir William, and left her chamber.

He deferred his visit to the Baronet no longer than till the next day ; and finding him in a good humour, ventured to propose the business in a jesting way.

“ Your kinsman and my daughter, Sir William,” said he, “ are, I find, far gone in a passion for each other— what say you, shall it be

“ a match ?”

" a match?" "A match!" repeated the Baronet, " why, has not Miss B. fifteen thousand pounds?"

This question produced a little alteration in Mr. B's countenance; his conscience reproached him with the depredation he had committed upon the patrimony of his child; but settling his looks to more serenity, "my daughter's having fifteen thousand pound," said he smiling, " will, I hope, be no objection."—"No certainly," resumed the Baronet, smiling likewise, "not on my side; but "me- thinks you are not very attentive to her interest, when you propose young Harley as a match for her!"

" I am

“ I am attentive to her best interest, her happiness”, said Mr. B.

“ Mr. Harley is one of the most amiable young men I ever knew; my daughter esteems him; if I had a hundred thousand pounds to give her, I should think them well bestowed upon your young kinsman”.

“ He is obliged to you for your good opinion,” replied the Baronet; “ but, I suppose, if this event takes place, you expect I should do something for him.” “ To be sure, Sir,” said Mr. B.

“ And why *to be sure?*” interrupted the Baronet hastily — “ he has no claims

" claims upon me, farther than what
" my generosity will admit of."

Mr. B. did not think it necessary to discuss this point with the old gentleman, satisfied as he was in his own mind with regard to the youth's succession, and conceiving that to pique him upon his generosity would be the most effectual means of engaging him to act properly towards Mr. Harley, he ventured to tell him that he would leave it entirely to him, to settle what he pleased upon Mr. Harley for the present; that, upon the day of marriage, he would pay down three thousand pounds of his daughter's fortune; and that the remainder should be settled

OF ELIZA. 109

settled upon her and the children of this marriage, to be a future provision for her and them, in case Sir William should find any cause to alter his favourable intentions towards Mr. Harley.

Nothing could be better calculated than this last clause, to bring the old gentleman into his measures ; whatever were his intentions with regard to his kinsman, he was resolved not to disclose them, that he might preserve in him that sense of dependence, which subjected him to his controul. He was indeed somewhat surprised at Mr. B's eagerness in the affair, not suspecting that he was so fully satisfied of Mr. Harley's claims ; and was

was ready to conclude that matters had gone farther between the young people than Mr. B. cared to own ; but this he was indifferent about, the offer was very advantageous for his kinsman ; and, as he was bound to no conditions, he thought it would be folly to reject it. He therefore told Mr. B. that he would take one night to consider upon his proposal, and bring him his answer the next morning himself.

Mr. B. departed very well satisfied with his negociation, and the Baronet, after ruminating a while upon what had passed, sent for Mr. Har-ley, who had been apprised of Mr.

B's visit,

B's visit, and waited the event with anxious impatience.

The tumult of his thoughts might be easily read in his artless countenance, when he presented himself before Sir William ; who, after railing him a little upon his presumption, in addressing a Lady of Miss B's fortune, added " What " is still more surprising, her father " is desirous of making up a match " between you. I shall do all that I " ought to facilitate it ; but in this, " I must be governed by prudence. " I may marry again ; I may have " children ; I look upon myself as " their steward, and accountable to " them for any alienation of my " fortune.

" fortune. Be not too sanguine there-
" fore in your hopes.—I shall con-
" sider of Mr. B's proposals, and
" do the best I can for you."

In this delicate circumstance, Mr. Harley could have little propensity to mirth; otherwise, as he has often said since, he could not fail of being diverted with the old man's notion, of being accountable to his children yet unborn, as their steward. However, he expressed great gratitude to him for his kind intentions; and this surprising turn in his affairs would have made him quite happy, were it not that it is the nature of love, to be most apprehensive of new difficulties,

culties, the nearer it is to the completion of its wishes.

Sir William kept his word, and went to Mr. B. the next morning; he had taken his resolution, which was such a one as might be expected from a man of his character. He demanded six thousand pounds of Miss B's fortune, to be paid into his hands; in consideration of which he was to settle four hundred pounds a year upon Mr. Harley, and two hundred a year jointure upon Eliza; the remainder of her fortune, he agreed should be settled upon the children; but the interest of it, when she came of age, to be enjoyed by Mr. Harley during his life. Mr. B.

who

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who in this treaty considered himself as matching his daughter to the heir of five thousand a year, accepted these conditions ; and all things being fully agreed on, Sir William was to present his young kinsman, the next day, in form to Eliza ; and Mr. B. thought it no longer necessary to conceal his intentions from his family.

Mrs. B. smiled sarcastically, and seemed to interest herself very little in the affair ; her husband imputed this indifference to some resentment, at his not having communicated his design to her before ; — but Miss Denby, practised as she was in dissimulation, could with difficulty hinder

her rage and grief from breaking out publicly. The moment she was alone with Eliza, she vented her spleen in the most bitter taunts ; she said that Mr. B. would incur the imputation of having trafficked away his daughter ; that so disproportioned a match would seem the consequence of some shocking indiscretion, which it was necessary to conceal. She added a thousand more reproaches, which served to shew the violent agitation of her own mind, but which produced no discomposure in that of Eliza ; she rather pitied her, when she reflected upon the latent cause of all these transports ; and took no other notice of her inve-

tives, than to tell her that it was not decent, in her presence, to censure her father's conduct so severely; and this also served her as a pretence to retire to her apartment, that she might indulge her own reflections, upon the approaching great change in her condition.

Miss Denby, when she left her, burst into a loud laugh, and prophesied that her dream of happiness would not long continue. — She remained closetted with her mother, great part of that evening; and went the next day to pay a visit, at some miles distance, that she might not be present at the first interview between the lovers.

Nothing could exceed the happiness of Mr. Harley and Eliza, in this near prospect of being united for ever. — Sir William too, who thought he had made a wise bargain, was contented; but Mr. B. was under some perplexity.

It was not possible for him to pay down the six thousand pounds, without having recourse to his wife's fortune; her frosty looks deterred him from entering into any explanation with her; and he resolved, at all hazards, to make free with some of those large sums, which he knew she had lodged in the public funds; and which he conceived his quality

of husband gave him a right to command.

A short excursion to London was necessary. He proposed taking his daughter with him, in order to provide cloaths for the approaching ceremony. Mr. Harley, to whom the shortest separation was death, begged permission to accompany them. Sir William furnished him with a hundred and fifty pounds, to make preparations. Small as this sum was, the generous youth destined half of it to his mother and sisters, who resided in London ; and whom he expected to meet at Mr. B's house in town, to be introduced to his charming

charming bride, having wrote to them for that purpose.

Miss Denby, who had by this time been able to assume an appearance of composure, saw them depart with a malignant joy; as their absence facilitated the success of those schemes, which, in conjunction with her mother, she had formed, to be revenged for her slighted passion.

Mr. B. as usual, preferring pleasure to business, gave the first days of his arrival to those amusements, which the present season could afford them in London.—A happier party could no where be seen; the three sisters of Mr. Harley were perfectly amiable; their mother was sensible

and virtuous ; and this tide of good fortune, that had flowed in upon her son, seemed to bring back all her former chearfulness.

At length Mr. B. began to enter upon the business, that had brought him to town, he was absent the whole day ; and returned in the evening, with a countenance so altered, and such evident marks of confusion and grief, as alarmed the whole company, but most his daughter ; who, pale and trembling, started from her chair, and running up to him eagerly, enquired if he was ill.

Mr. B. answered sighing, that he indeed was not well ; and
desired

desired her to go with him to his own apartment.—Then bowing to the rest without looking on them, he hastily retired, followed by Eliza, who was already in tears. As soon as he entered his chamber he shut the door, and perceiving that Eliza was weeping, he could with difficulty restrain his own tears.

“ My dear child,” said he, in a broken voice, “ I have ruined myself,—but that is little,—I have ruined you!—Oh! pursued he passionately, you can never forgive me, you will hate your father.” Eliza, in the utmost agony at this strange exclamation,

tion, threw herself at her father's feet; and takeing his hand which she kissed respectfully,—“ I beg of “ you Sir,” said she, “ not to wound “ my heart with such language; “ you have ever been a most indul- “ gent parent to me:—what can “ have happened to occasion this “ disorder?”—

“ Hear me, my child,” interrupted Mr. B. with a look and accent full of wildness,—“ let me plunge “ you at once into the full depth “ of your misery;—you have no “ fortune, or what indeed is next “ to nothing; you have no lover “ now, for Sir William will inevi- “ tably break off the treaty for

" your marriage with his kinsman ;
" and all this ruin is occasioned
" by the thoughtless extravagance
" of your father ! "—Eliza, though
prepared to hear something dreadful,
felt the full force of this
stroke ; and continued silent, im-
movable, and her eyes fixed upon
the ground.

Her father, struck to the heart
with this mute sorrow, so affecting,
yet so full of respect for him
who was the cause, rose from his
chair ; and walking about his
chamber with a distracted pace,
exclaimed in the most bitter terms
against himself. — This roused
Eliza, from her melancholy reve-
rie ;

rie ; she endeavoured to compose her looks, and following her father with a beseeching action,
“ Let me conjure you Sir,” said she,
“ to calm your mind.—I can submit
“ patiently to this misfortune—
“ my chief concern is for you ;—
“ but, after all, your affairs are not
“ yet desperate ;—you have married
“ a lady with a very considerable
“ fortune.”

“ Ah ! the fiend ! ” interrupted Mr. B. “ She has deceived me.”—Then sitting down, and endeavouring to assume some degree of composure, “ Eliza,” said he sighing ;
“ do me the justice to believe, that
“ it was never my intention to hurt
“ your

“ your interest.—A fatal love of
“ play had made a wreck of my
“ own fortune. I sought to retrieve
“ my losses. — I added greatly to
“ them. — Still fooled by hope, I
“ engaged more deeply;—till (how
“ can I speak it without dying for
“ shame?) I was obliged to retire
“ into the country, with little more
“ than the third part of your fortune.
“ —I could not resolve to reduce you
“ to a narrower way of living, than
“ what you had always been accus-
“ tomed to; and this imprudence
“ increased my perplexities.

“ Mrs. Denby seemed thrown by
“ Providence in my way, to enable
“ me to repair the waste I had made
“ in

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" in your fortune.—I knew she was
" very rich; she affected to act
" generously, and to trust impli-
" citly the man, on whom she
" bestowed her person; but this
" was a snare to draw me in, with
" what views heaven knows;—for
" I find that, before our marriage,
" she had made over her whole for-
" tune to two of her relations; a
" trick to prevent me from being
" a shilling the better for her;—on
" the contrary, I am more involved,
" having, since this fatal marriage,
" been at all the expences of her
" household, as well as my own;
" so that, my dear injured child,
" of fifteen thousand pounds, which

" your

“ your grandfather left you, you
“ have little more than three re-
“ maining.”

“ And have I so much ? ” inter-
rupted Eliza, who expected to hear
that she was reduced to beggary.—

“ Be not afflicted, dear Sir ; this sum
“ will preserve me from want or de-
“ pendence ; and I hope I can ac-
“ comodate my desires to any station
“ in which it shall please Providence
“ to place me.”

“ And can you”, resumed her
father, looking tenderly upon her,
“ can you, Eliza, resign your lover
“ with equal fortitude ? —I am not
“ able to keep my word with Sir
“ William, in regard to your for-
“ tune ;

“ tune ; we must therefore look
“ upon the treaty as broke off—poor
“ Harley ! he loves you — how will
“ he look upon me ?—poor youth !
“ what a stroke will this be to
“ him !”—Eliza endeavoured to sup-
press a sigh at the mention of her
lover ; her father observed this de-
licacy, which pierced him to the
heart.

“ Do not despair yet, my dear
“ child,” said he ; “ Heaven I hope
“ will not separate you, — as soon as
“ I am a little composed, I will talk
“ with Mr. Harley—in the mean
“ time I would have you prepare
“ him for what he must know ; leave
“ me,

" me, my Eliza; I will send for him
" in a quarter of an hour."

Miss B. quitted the room, uncertain in what manner to acquaint her lover with the present melancholy situation of their affairs, without drawing upon her father that censure which his imprudent conduct had incurred.

Mr. Harley, who had passed the moments of her absence in the most racking inquietude—for he had perceived more of grief than illness in the countenance of Mr. B. and therefore dreaded some fatal disappointment of his hopes—met her as she came out of his chamber—tears filled her eyes when she saw him.

Struck

Struck to the heart at this sight, he remained for a moment silent, gazing upon her ; then suddenly taking her hand, which he prest with a vehement action :

“ If I am to be wretched, madam,
“ tell me so at once ; leave me not
“ a moment in suspence—let me
“ know the worst.”—Eliza, excessively moved at the agony she saw him in, stepped into a with-drawing room next her father’s chamber. Here, by some preparatory expressions of tenderness and condolance, she endeavoured to soften the disagreeable news she had to tell him. Mr. Harley hastily interrupted her — “ I understand you,
“ madam,” said he ; “ you esteem,

“ you

“ you pity me, but you are not to
“ be mine, your father has changed
“ his mind.”

“ Think not so unjustly of my
“ father,” resumed Eliza, “ it de-
“ pends no longer upon him to
“ unite us, by a sad concurrence of
“ unhappy accidents, his affairs are
“ so involved, that he is not able
“ to fulfill his agreement with Sir
“ William, with regard to the pay-
“ ment of my fortune.—You are
“ entitled to something far more
“ considerable than what I now can
“ bring you; — and it cannot be
“ expected that Sir William will
“ continue a treaty, when my father

“ has it not in his power to perform
“ the conditions which he had ac-
“ cepted.” —

“ Oh ! my Eliza,” cried Mr. Harley, taking her hand which he kissed respectfully, tears at the same time flowing fast from his eyes ; — “ but may I not see Mr. B. ?” resumed he, making towards his chamber, “ sure he will not refuse to speak to me ” ! Eliza followed, intreating him not to disturb her father at present, to which with some reluctance he consented ; but Mr. B. who had heard all that passed, suddenly opened his own door and entered the room. — “ Leave us, my dear,” said he to his daughter,

ter,

ter, "I would speak with Mr. Harley alone." — Eliza retired, and Mr. B. with some confusion in his looks thus spoke to him.

" My daughter has told you my misfortunes; but she has concealed my faults. I ought to take deserved shame to myself." He then acquainted him with the real state of his circumstances, and his recent disappointment with regard to his wife —

" You see," added he, " that it no longer depends upon me to make you happy.—You are too much in love to value this abatement in Eliza's fortune; but Sir William, as affairs now stand,

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“ will never consent to your marriage, and it is not your interest “ to disoblige him.”—

“ If I am his heir at law,” replied Mr. Harley, “ he cannot disinherit me.” “ But he may marry,” said Mr. B. “ and disappoint your expectations.”—

“ I find I am to be wretched,” resumed Mr. Harley sighing—“ and “ yet—but no!”—cried he in a tone expressive of the despair that possessed his thoughts—“ I ought not to “ expect that you will sacrifice the “ charming Eliza to my uncertain hopes, my future prospects.”—

“ I under-

“ I understand you,” interrupted Mr. B. “ Generous youth ! yes, “ Eliza shall be yours, I engage my “ faith and honour to you for the “ performance of my promise. As “ heir to Sir William’s opulent “ estate, you would take her, re- “ duced as she is nearly to indi- “ gence ; and here I solemnly protest “ to make her yours, whether you “ are ever his heir or not.—But, “ alas ! in the latter case, what will “ become of you both ? what will “ three thousand pounds do for “ you ? — but, after all, this is an “ idle fear ; though Sir William “ were to marry again, which is

“ highly improbable, it is still less
“ likely that he should have chil-
“ dren.”

Mr. Harley, who in his present transport was not capable of admitting one thought that had a tendency to cloud it, confirmed these sanguine hopes; the only difficulty now was, how to act for the present. Mr. B. though greatly disgusted with the ungenerous proceeding of his wife, was determined to sacrifice his resentment to the happiness of his daughter. He thought it not impossible, but she might be prevailed upon, to furnish him with the sum necessary to enable him to fulfil his agreement with Sir William, in which case

every

every thing would be on the same footing as before.

He told Mr. Harley that, for his and Eliza's sake, he would condescend to make the trial ; but that, if it failed, he would separate himself for ever from a woman who had so basely imposed upon him.

The lovers, once more secure of each other, suffered no apprehension of future difficulties, to interrupt their present happiness. All was joy again in this little family ; and Mr. B. unwilling to share his own anxiety and disquiet with them, affected a tranquillity which he was far from feeling ;—and retired to his

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own apartment, to conceal his uneasiness from their observation.

Another week had elapsed; and he was not yet determined, in what manner he should move the affair to his wife, by letter or in person; for it cost him a great deal to endeavour to subdue his resentment, so far as to treat with her upon any terms of friendship.—

In the midst of this irresolution and uncertainty, he was surprised one evening to see the Baronet's coach and six stop at his door, from which the old man handed out Mrs. B. and Miss Denby, with an air so cheerful and gallant, as shewed him

highly

highly satisfied with his companions.

Mr. B. in some perplexity concerning the intention of their unexpected arrival, left the care of receiving them to Eliza; who performed it with her usual sweetness and complaisance, notwithstanding the cold civility of Miss Denby, in whom a malignant joy seemed, at times, to break through the settled cloud on her brow.—

Eliza, who expected her father would be greatly disconcerted by their visit, went herself to acquaint him with it, after she had attended her mother-in-law to her apartment. Mr. B. though she earnestly entreated

him, refused to go to his wife, but went immediately to Sir William.

He found him in serious conversation with Mr. Harley, and was surprised to see, in the looks of the youth, grief and resentment restrained by respect; and in those of the old man, a mixture of haughtiness and confusion.

His countenance however cleared up a little at the entrance of Mr. B. and Mr. Harley taking this opportunity to retire, the Baronet after the usual civilities were over, asked him in a grave accent, whether, in the treaty they had entered into, for a marriage between the young people,

ple; he had any expectations of Mr. Harley being his heir?

Mr. B. frankly told him he had.

"Then the business is at an end," resumed Sir William; "for I am determined to marry."

Mr. B. shewing some surprise at this declaration, the Baronet asked him whether, when he first moved the affair to him, he did not mention his marrying again as an event which might happen.—

This indeed was true; but Mr. B. scarce thought he was in earnest when he said it; and therefore it proved no obstacle to his intentions. He hinted as much to Sir William, which

which the old man took somewhat amiss. However, he assured him that he did not intend to tye him down to his former agreement; and that, as there was no doubt but he might settle his daughter more advantageously, he was very willing that the affair should go no further.

Mr. B. in his present perplexity, could make no other answer, than that he would take a little time to consider.—He then assumed a gayger countenance, and a behaviour more free from restraint.

Sir William told him, not without a little confusion, that Miss Denby was the Lady who had consented to

make

make him happy ; that her mother approved her choice ; and ceremoniously added, that he hoped he should have his concurrence.—

Mr. B. who already suspected the party, was not surprised at hearing her name ;—“ She is very young,” said he thoughtlessly ; but added immediately after, “ she is prudent.”—

This was Sir William’s cue for launching into a long enumeration of those merits in her, which had engaged his regard ;—he left youth and beauty out of the catalogue, having discernment enough to perceive that it was not very decent for a man near seventy, to lay any

stress

stress upon those qualities which displayed so great a disproportion.

Mr. Harley coming into the room, he left him alone with Mr. B. while he went to pay his respects to the Ladies, before he went to his own house.—

The poor youth was so oppressed with grief, that for some moments he could not utter a word.

"My dream of happiness," said he at last, "is over; Sir William has provided himself with a wife, —and she will doubtless provide him with an heir."—

This harsh expression escaped him. He repented of it immediately afterwards; and though, from what had passed

passed between him and Miss Denby, he had all the reason in the world to imagine, that she had brought this affair about, in order to be revenged on him for refusing her, yet he kept her secret inviolably.

END OF VOL. I.

62.

ANNO 30

John XXII has confirmed before
Blew and in publice sight his late
privy seal with his signature
dated at **4 DE 58** do anno 30
and printed out of the Regist
of the same year and sealed